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Cyrus Legacy

The Prophecy



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INTRODUCTION

Herodotus lived around 400 A.C. and is known as the oldest Greek historian. In his first book Herodotus talks about the Persian Empire and briefly about the life of Cyrus, one of its great leaders. Today in the British Museum of London, one can see the Cylinder of Cyrus. Written by King Cyrus, it is considered the first charter of human rights in history. A replica of the Cylinder can be found at the UN headquarters in New York. On it, Cyrus established the premises of his government which can be summarized as: religious tolerance, the end of slavery and freedom of education.

Herodotus also gives us an idea of what Ancient Babylon was like, from its grandeur to down its measurements it was the largest and most powerful city of its time. He even speaks of ruins from the Tower of Babel which Nebuchadnezzar had rebuilt during his reign. The last two magnificent levels of this temple were made of pure gold. The historian speaks of the destruction of Babylon during its great conquest by Cyrus II of Persia. He comments that on the night of the attack the city gate remained mysteriously open and unlocked.

Archeological data has confirmed the descriptions made in Herodotus' book regarding Ur of the Chaldees, Ecbatana, which is modern day Hamadan in Iran. Babylon, Persepolis and Pasargadae truly existed and as for the names of the characters, I have also remained faithful.

The information contained in the Bible, was also fundamental to Herodotus' work. In Isaiah 44:1-13, 23, 28 the prophet speaks of Cyrus as anointed and calls him by name. Contained in these verses are the very strategies he used in battle to conquer Babylon. This same prophesy, which predicted that Cyrus would come into power and free the Hebrews of their slavery from Babylon, was written almost 200 years before its fulfillment. Isaiah lived around 740 A.D. The

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conquest occurred around 608 A.D., beginning with the first time King Nebuchadnezzar visited Jerusalem. The wall of Jerusalem was destroyed around 587 A.D. Cyrus of Persia invaded what seemed to be the invincible Babylon around 537 A.D. He conquered the Babylonians and freed the many people which were maintained as slaves, including the Hebrews. Just like this, the words of the prophet Jeremiah were confirmed as written in his book in Jeremiah 25: 10, 11, 29; as well as in Daniel 9: 2.

In Jeremiah 52, there is a description given about the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. The details and measurements of Solomon's Temple are recorded in the book of 1 Kings 6: 7. The peoples idolatry, which served as the reason for which they were taken captive, is depicted in 1 Kings 12: 26-33; in Ezekiel 8:1-18; 20:13; and again in the book of Malachi 1: 13. The night of the invasion can be found in Daniel 5.

Archeological evidences uncovered in 1854, and at the end of the nineteenth century have proven that Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus and therefore the grandson of King Nebuchadnezzar. Cyrus' decree sent the Hebrew people back to Jerusalem to rebuild their Temple and its walls. This stated in the book of Ezra 1: 1-11. In fact, the text found in Ezra is almost identical to the engravings on the Cylinder, which was written by Cyrus of Persia, as found in the British Museum of London and also on its replica at the UN headquarters.

Archeologists have also encountered a copy with similar texts written on horse bones, in China. Ezra comments in his book, that these copies would be scattered wherever there were Hebrews at that time.

Where I have mentioned the Bible and history, I have tried to be faithful and true to the texts while marrying them successfully with archeological evidences. As for this book, I have created a historical fiction to better tell the fantastic story of this amazing ruler: Cyrus II of Persia, the King that conquered the largest empire of all time.

Cyrus held

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in him a noble character as well as an impeccable reputation. He ruled on tolerance, liberty and altruism. As a result he obtained from his subjects respect and admiration and we have been left with his legacy, a relic for all humanity: the Cylinder of Cyrus – The First Charter of Human Rights.

1

In the face of the great mission that they possessed, the two men attempted to remain courageous and confident. It was not merely a long, dangerous and tiring journey. Their success was vital. A young man by the name of Eliafa, fighting an internal battle, struggled to remain calm. He knew the importance and strain of this sacred task. Despite the prophet's warning that it would be suicide, he was aware that finishing well did not always mean that they would emerge unharmed from the challenge. All 850 kilometers, which they travelled on foot, were full of uncertainties and insecurities. Horses were a luxury they had lost since the invasion of the Babylonians. They did not even have camels. They needed to carry all of their provisions necessary for this long journey upon their shoulders, contrary to the custom of using caravans under such circumstances. Only two could go, this way the guards and authorities at their destination would not be overly curious about their intentions. They would try to pass through the impermeable walls of Babylon, undetected, and with all this on their minds, and on their shoulders, they were literally burdened. They travelled void of any gold, jewelry and fine clothes, they brought only what was necessary. They carried with them treasure of inestimable value to their people, but of no monetary value to the other nations.

The road on which they travelled was treacherous. Horrendous crimes followed by robbery were common on that route. Without divine providence, such an experience was almost inevitable. As if that weren't enough, they were conscious of their vulnerability to wild animals, among which were many feared beasts. However, the reason that drove them to pursue this adventure was that it was an elevated honour and they were grateful for being chosen. The journey itself was not the cause of their fear, for this was their first experience travelling under perilous circumstances. Jeremiah, his travelling companion, was an older man, both strong and intelligent who possessed enviable composure. He had a great deal of experience with long journeys, so

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Eliafa could not have asked for better company. Envisioning the greatness of their task he felt the fear lifting off of him, as was the tension, it gave rise to the delight of the privilege.

Due to their cargo limitations, their food supply was scarce in comparison to their days of travel. It would take them approximately 35 days. They would need to ration their food into small daily portions for it to last them that long. The scorching temperatures throughout the day, and the uncertainty of water required them to carry more water than they did food. While good blankets took up any remaining space, freezing nights were no joking matter. Everything needed to be meticulously controlled; any miscalculations would result in devastating consequences and ultimately keep them from fulfilling their elevated responsibility.

Nothing undesirable had occurred within their first ten days of travel, yet the darkness of that particular night caused the ghosts of fear to hold a tight grip on young Eliafa. From afar the howls of coyotes seemed to presage a bad omen.

"I am going to have a look around to make sure that we are safe. Maintain the fire big enough to frighten small animals, but not large enough to attract any other unwanted guests," said Jeremiah as he began to leave taking up his machete and a torch while warming his free hand in on his tunic. "I won't go far; I will walk around until I have given a cautious vigil."

Eliafa had gathered fallen branches before the sun had set and gathered the sand around into a mound to shield them from the unforgiving desert winds. Behind it, he placed all their baggage and covers and then made a fire. He was now thinking about putting some water to boil so that he could cook some wheat. Distracted, he did not notice that a spark had flown and landed on their things. The protective wall and all of their things began also to burn. Eliafa stood up in a panic. He could hear Jeremiah's voice in his mind, *"This could attract*

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attention.” He scrambled desperately trying to find something that could combat the flames, but quickly realized that it was too late.

From a distance Jeremiah noticed an unnatural brightness radiating from the location in which he had left his companion and immediately turned back. As he approached, he heard voices. He began to run through the darkness, stumbling and almost falling at times. The torch he had brought with him went out. When he finally reached the site, the brightness had disappeared. He could only make out small scattered fires and embers spread among charred remains.

“Eliafa! Eliafa!” he cried.

Geremiah was answered only with silence, broken by howls, howls of wolves in the vast, black night. After sometime Geremiah was able to make out a figure lying on the ground; it was motionless. Quickly he moved towards the body and dragged it near the original fire. It seemed to understand the urgency of the situation because as Geremiah laid the body down it the embers came to life, birthing flames. Eliafa was unconscious and he had his hands tied together. Realizing what had happened Geremiah trembled with fear. “The parchment,” he exclaimed.

The silence continued. He untied Eliafa who responded to the movements and opened his eyes. He was badly beaten. His right leg appeared to be dislocated. He was suffering great pains, but as his thoughts became less hazy he set his pain aside worrying about one thing, the parchment.

“Are you well?” Geremiah asked anxiously, as he shifted some twigs in the fire to keep it alive. He received no answer which suggested that Eliafa need immediate care.

The wolves seemed closer now, their howls were much louder. He needed to make the fire bigger, nurse his friend and secure the parchment, wherever it was. Perhaps what he needed what to pursue the thieves and obtain the precious document as soon as he could? Struggling with his situation he decided to act in order of priorities. He

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hastily put more twigs and branches in the fire, without taking his attention off of Eliafa. He groaned with difficulty, trying to pronounce something.

“The...scroll,” he said painfully.

“Do not worry; I will look for it as soon as I am able,”

“Look for is now!” he cried, grimacing in the pain which he caused himself.

The experienced traveller accommodated his young companion by popping his head up on a stone. He took a branch and lit it in the fire and began to sift through the burnt remnants of their possession. He saw that their belongings had been scattered, in search for valuables. The things they most needed were there, water, some food and a container with a bit of oil. He continued to search awhile longer but without any success he decided to treat his wounded friend. He used a little bit of the water and mixed it with mud, and made a paste to apply on Eliafa’s wounds after he had put oil on them. He accommodated his friend as best he could and covered him with a blanket. Relieved and warm, Eliafa quickly drifted off into sleep.

Seeing that he was asleep and well, Jeremiah continued his search, he would not be able to sleep until the parchment was in his hands once again. He had deserted the idea of tracking the thieves for he could not leave Eliafa alone in his condition. Never the less he searched until morning with the great hope that he would encounter it, but he had searched in vain. He concentrated on his idea that he would continue in the morning. Daylight would be an excellent ally in the success of this difficult task. The chances of success lessened with every hour that passed. Doubt, uncertainty and desperation began to house themselves in his thoughts.

Finally, the sun emerged, its golden light streaking the desert sky. Warmth penetrated his entire body as his eyes fell upon something familiar. He seized the object, seeing that it was the scroll, and made sure that they were in perfect order. He now held tightly in his hands

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the purpose of their mission. They could continue their journey, grateful and confident because the God in which they believed had protected. Thinking back, if he hadn't left their campsite when he had it would have been a lot worse for both of them, and the end would not have been as positive as it had turned out. The thieves' targeted many of their things but not that which was most vital. He allowed himself to be satisfied, because in truth, the damage could have been worse. Now he could concentrate himself with treating his friend. For that he lamented. They would need to wait a few extra days before continuing their journey and that would cause them to ration their remaining supplies rigorously. After everything they had experienced that night, he considered being alive and possessing the parchment two grand victories. The thought of their arrival energized him.

Regardless of their difficulties, they had overcome their greatest enemy: time, which insisted on moving sluggishly. It extended endlessly into the night and tormented them while prolonging the everlasting daytime. It seemed that they were prisoners of it, but finally they arrived. The darkness of the night would become their accomplice in their tentative to infiltrate the city. They waited for the right moment, just before the large iron gates would close. Their strengths had reached their peak, they could barely walk. They would need to force themselves to remain awake and alert to every detail because this was the apex of their mission. Even though the ultimate limit of their strength had presented itself, they were to be ignored. They were determined to distance themselves from that limit and maintain their grasp on the situation. Their hunger and their exhaustion would be suppressed upon seeing their objective completed. There was no time, nor space for discouragement. It seems that the owner of the message they carried understood that any additional challenge, would travel far beyond their limits and now spared them, and was leading them during the final stage.

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Exhausted and almost staggering, they finally managed to reach their destination. They approached a door leading to one of the back rooms of the palace. Inside, there were several men. Besides the hiss of crickets they could hear many voices busy inside the room.

Inside the room, the lighting was dim and cast flickering shadows and on the stone walls, were some faint cuneiform writings. This was the stage for an important meeting. The men are all Jews, prisoners of war, and of Nebuchadnezzar. The mighty king of Babylon had recently celebrated one of his conquests, the dominion of the Hebrew people.

Nebuchadnezzar, with his troops, invaded Jerusalem, completely destroying the city. As a trophy of war he brought captives to Babylon along with the spoils of their armies; the riches and sacred vessels of the temple.

Many of the Hebrew leaders were there, priests, prophets, princes and men of war. Their upset and worried expressions rippled from one side to the other. They spoke in at the same time in hushed, murmuring tones. They could even attempt a daring escape from their captors but they were many. They came in the masses; after all they were a nation. Now they were a nation of slaves, subjects, but a nation nonetheless. The number of captives was estimated at about 20 thousand men.

The Hebrews believed that they were a people chosen by God. The promises that God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were of prosperity, nothing like what was happening. However, they had been warned by many over the decades impending captivity. They had forgotten that God's promises were conditional. The people did not understand what was happening, or the reasons for so much hardship and sacrifices. Everything seemed like a nightmare. The God in whom they believed should be preparing some sort of release for them or a savior. Otherwise, the humiliating and disastrous situation that they were in would continue to a time undetermined. They knew that if not for a bigger hand, a provider, using a supernatural force, they would not

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be able to believe in freedom. In long life of slavery and subjection to a pagan kingdom, would perhaps deter them from such thoughts.

They were overwhelmed, captive and humiliated but they at that moment they wanted to know how close or how distant the day of their liberation was. A few Babylonian soldiers kept guard which meant that their meeting was known and approved by the King. In the midst of the bustle and agitation the voice of one of the priest stood out.

“Children of Abraham!” he began his speech and the other voices receded. Some of the men got settled, he continued standing; “We are helpless prey. We no longer possess our homes, our properties, nor our city or our temple. Our homeland is distant and we have been exiled in great numbers. We have with us many women and children. How will we direct our people under these terrible circumstances?”

They heard pounding at the door. One of the guards opened it. Seeing two figures stumbling about, he imagined them to be drunk and closed the door. Geremiah and Eliafa gathered all of their remaining strength and surprised everyone with new and strong blows on the door that had just been closed in their faces. This time, the other guard opened the door. With great effort to maintain upright posture, the young man exclaimed, “We are Hebrew messengers!” and he allowed them in.

Geremiah held the scroll in his hands. The significance of that moment gave them strength to overcome the chaotic physical state in which they found themselves. Although he was wheezing, dirty, and skinny he produced yet, a smile on his face, the joy of their accomplishment. They had finally reached their journey's end and were happy to see their own people, even on land in which they were oppressed by the Babylonians.

With great effort Geremiah spoke. “We bring a message from the prophet Jeremiah.” These words filled the hearts of those men with vibrant joy, it sounded like a cry of liberation. The God of Abraham had not forgotten them. Certainly, the message coming from Jeremiah

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would be to indicate God's plan to deliver them. The nightmare of their imprisonment would be over. Jeremiah extended his hand, holding out the roll. Everyone was very attentive. "This is the message of God through Jeremiah. It will guide our people in this time of exile."

The priest took the scroll from Jeremiah's hand and opened it hurriedly. With a firm and lively voice he said, "This is the message of the God of Israel. He has not forgotten us!" and began to read aloud, "'thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters. And give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there, and not diminish. Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you carry and pray to the Lord, for in its peace you will have peace. For thus saith the LORD of hosts: After seventy years in Babylon will visit you, and fulfill to you my promise making you bring back. "

The message was a mixture of hope, guidance, and at the same time, promoted sadness and frustration. Hope, because it dated the end of their suffering, one day they would be freed. Guidance, because now they know what to do. That was the reason for the meeting, to find a direction. Aside from the dream of liberation, they would need to be faced with the harsh reality that after that night, at the break of a new day, they would have to resume their lives as slaves of a pagan king, in strange and hostile land. The message was real, and came from a trustworthy God. But the dream would not be released at that moment, leaving them discouraged. They would have to learn lessons of patience and wait for seventy long and painful years. They would have to settle with their losses and adapt to a new beginning.

They had received from God, through the prophets, and through the years, clear warnings. To caution them, the Lord did not leave them ignorant with respect to time, he had even left them with the name of their liberator.

2

Thirty long, gruesome years of captivity had passed. In one of the villages which the Hebrews had built, on one of the streets, lived Azgad. The man, now very old, seemed adapted to living there. Conformed to the pain, he even found it good, because humans have the ability to adapt to almost everything. Sometimes a few hours are sufficient, sometimes days and even years. But when two years, three years, ten years, or, in their case, thirty years pass; it was enough time to get accommodated. They felt that they were the owners of the place, they felt at home.

For this very reason they received God's constant warnings. His message was to marry, plant and live normal lives and above all that they did not forget that one day they would have to leave everything they had built there and return to Jerusalem. Old Azgad's family was already well established, as was most of the neighborhood. The houses were well built, although simple. Every day you could see men on oxen carts, bringing hay for the cattle and children playing contentedly, on the edges of the street. With the irrigation system, natural beauty was well maintained. The grass was green and the wildflowers grew bringing colour to this land. Some goats grazed freely in the field there and you could hear the sounds of animals, and birds singing, and the squeals of happy children. Women walked by carrying jugs of water on their heads. One of them yells, calling her children who played on the street. They wore simple clothes, straight pieces of fabric shaped using a belt around the waist made of the same poor fabric or a rope. Fine linens such as colourful silks and embroidered robes were only used by nobility. Regardless of the difficulties, they had adjusted to the life of a captive. They had food in abundance and had acquired some land, houses and animals.

They had families but they were in a strange land. It was not their homeland, their culture, or their religion. There they were treated as

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slaves, strangers and were considered an inferior people. For this reason they needed to maintain a living hope that they would return to the land of their fore fathers. However, there were still many years to go. All the hardship that they had endured thus far was not even half of the time allotted to their imprisonment.

The time which promoted change was dangerous; little by little they were taking on the customs, habits, culture and beliefs of the people there. They lived in Babylon, the city of the gods, the seat of the greatest kingdom of all time. Why would they want to return? The group of people who thought so were among the poorest of the Hebrews, composed of shepherds, farmers, and those living in poor villages. On the other hand, there was the group of nobility, composed of scholars, priests, princes, who lived in the king's palace. In the first period of captivity, which lasted eleven years, when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, brought to Babylon; Jehoiachin, the king, the royal family, princes and all the valiant men, among them Daniel. The elite of the Hebrew kingdom had come to dwell in the royal palace. The king himself Jehoiachin was taken from prison and received at the palace. He lived and ate at the table of the king of Babylon.

The Babylonian kingdom was branded by its magnificent palaces, where hundreds of people lived and worked. It was not only the Hebrews that King Nebuchadnezzar had as his subjects. People of other captured nations languished there.

The greatest plunder that a king could bring back as a trophy from a dominated nation were its people. Nebuchadnezzar had conquered a large part of the kingdoms of that time. He has taken their riches, such as gold, silver, bronze, iron and precious stones as well as linens and colour textiles, which were considered a grand treasure.

This was the objective of his conquests. Not only to gain the lands but to acquire riches and manpower that would be at their disposition. All this would make his kingdom known to all as an incomparable strength. With its unparalleled edifices, its protection was made by a

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two solid walls surrounding the city. The smaller counterpart was 100 meters in height and wide enough for a four horse chariot travel. Built inside the second external wall temples and houses were constructed. Much time and an uncountable number of people to build all of this, excluding the extravagant and sumptuous palaces in with the kind abided. King Nebuchadnezzar nominated Zedekiah to remain with the remnant people in Jerusalem, where he reigned for 11 years. Nebuchadnezzar returned taking rest of the people captive, destroying the city wall, the temple and all the palaces and houses in the city.

He attained their remained treasures including those in the temple and pieces of the temple itself, such as the columns of gold, silver and bronze. Furthermore, he gave order puncture Zedekiah's eyes and kept him in prison until the day he died. Only the impoverished, in small numbers stayed in the leftover ruins of Jerusalem; the prophet Jeremiah chose to stay with them.

The leaders, princes and priests struggled to keep the dream of returning to their sacred city alive. It was important to conserve their customs and traditions, especially their faith in the promises of their God.

In his room, Azgad gathered his family around his bed. He lie in his bed at 102 years of age. To his right his youngest son placed in his father's arms his newborn son to receive a blessing. The father, sight already failing, with a weak and trembling voice held the child. With great effort he began to speak saying, "Like this child, another child will be born in another kingdom of this world. His name will be Cyrus and he will be powerful; very powerful for it will be he that will conquer Babylon."

For a moment he lost his strength, it appeared to be his end. Azagde was living in his last moments. His family, realizing this, watched apprehensively. His youngest son took his father's head in his hands. Azgad opened his eyes, recuperating his strengths and said, "The prophet Isaiah predicted that Cyrus will liberate our people and the

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prophet Jeremiah has told us that this will happen after 70 years of captivity have passed,” he paused and continued with great effort. “40 years have already passed. Just as this child, in 30 years, will be a strong youth, Cyrus as well will be at the age of a great warrior, who will deliver us. May this child be richly blessed just as Cyrus will be blessed.”

The child’s mother, standing near her husband, takes the infant in her arms. The elderly man breathes once more, “You will all return to our homeland. You will rebuild the temple of the God of Israel. May you receive blessings; remain prosperous and live to see these things.”

His youngest son still holding his father’s head shuts his eyes, after his last words. Those who were advanced in years stressed the promise of their liberty. In this way their hope was kept alive. Azgad had not forgotten. The name of their liberator was Cyrus, just as the prophet Isaiah had mentioned (Isaiah 45:1). The time remaining, predicted by the older gentleman and the prophet Jeremiah was 30 years. (Jeremiah 29:10) Cyrus would defeat the Babylonians and free the Jews.

The kingdom from which Cyrus came was incognito. Some information about this prophecy was unknown to the prophets and the people. The very identity of this king was concealed. No one at that point in time had ever heard of a king that would not conquer a land without conquering its people as slaves. The liberator of Israel was to do this. It was what the Jews believed and had the prophets had predicted. The conqueror of the invincible Babylon, the golden city, the city of the gods, and the powerful empire of Nebuchadnezzar, would be greater.

This was unimaginable, because as far as they knew there was no king that would match the pomp, glory and power which Nebuchadnezzar possessed. He was adored and regarded as God himself. The idea of another king, astute enough to challenge the potency of Babylon, was completely inconceivable to any human being. For the impenetrable walls that surrounded the city, the large bronze

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gates, and its infallible security were prepared such that a prophecy like this would never be fulfilled.

3

The king of the Medes, Astyages, had a fantastic city as the capital of his kingdom in Ecbatana. He ruled over a large territory, which include that of the Persians. The Medes were a great power and a strongly established empire.

The beautiful city had been constructed by Deioces, the third Median king preceding Astyages. It rested on a hill surrounded by a range of mountains and lush, leafy forests. There was layered, rounded walls each layer beginning in the middle of the one before it. The base was pearl white, and the second layer was black like quartz, the third a deep mahogany red and the fourth turquoise blue, the fifth orange as a sunset and the last layers were silver and gold. There were in total seven layers. The coloured walls encircled the city, having a circumference of on kilometer. The final layers of the wall displayed the empire's abundance of precious metals at that time.

The Median king had a reputation for being cruel and cold king whom ruled his kingdom with an iron fist. Feared and respected by his subjects, he maintained control and was always envisioning even greater conquests of power.

On day, the king gave commands for his wise-men, counsellors, and magicians to gather for a meeting. Many of them were apprehensive; the reason for the meeting must be serious. The king would only summon everyone together when something very extraordinary would occur. The king's demeanor looked heavy. Musicians entered the room playing a sombre and mystical tune. The king sat upon his magnificent throne, his pageantry was envied by many

other kings. The Medes were well known by their elegant and luxurious clothing.

All those present looked at him attentively. A servant brought him a drink and after taking a drink he began to speak, "I had a dream that greatly disturbed me. In the dream water would pour out of my daughter's body. The amount of water was so copious that it flooded all of Asia. This was my dream and I demand an interpretation. Tell me what I must do, you all know how much I love my daughter, Mandana."

The king seemed agitated and nervous. The magicians, wise-men and counsellors spoke amongst themselves for a while. Any false prediction could cost their lives as well as the lives of their families. While the musicians played, attempting to calm the king, one of the wise-men rose up saying, "Oh, King, my lord, we are unanimous in our beliefs. This dream is a warning that has been given to you. Your daughter Mandana will birth a son who will rule over your kingdom and who will conquer all of Asia."

One of the counsellors contributed saying, "We have a suggestion to present before the king. This dream was forewarning so that you, O King, would be able to avoid this fate. Do not act against your daughter's life. Instead send her to a distant kingdom where her son will not be a threat to your throne, my lord."

Astyages favored the idea, for he loved his daughter and did not intend to harm her and she was at an age proper for marriage. He could arrange for her to marry a nobleman from an outlying kingdom and thus her son would not impose any risk.

The next morning King Astyages walked along the palace gardens with his wife, Queen Aryenis. The two of them sauntered through the sculpted openings of the tall, interlocking bushes with delicate flower

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beds and picturesque fountains. The spring morning was crisp and golden. A cool breeze carried the sweet tune of the many birds and flowers of ever hue circled the marble columns from which water fell.

The queen herself reflected the beauty and enchantment of the morning. She wore a long white garment. Her long, dark hair was tied and she had a lovely face, calm and submissive, yet by no means did it undo her royal and elegant stance. The king plucked a dappled, yellow rose and placed it onto her dress. It graced the ornament broche which held the dress over her right shoulder. She smiled in gratitude. The king was normally serious and cold and possessed facial convulsions which intensified in anger. However, these characteristics were uncommon to his family. In a way he had a dual personality.

Astyages was soft and amiable that morning, walking with his wife, and he spoke to her in a tranquil voice saying, "I have been thinking about our daughter Mandana." The Queen paused to listen to her husband, "I have decided that we should arrange a marriage for her with Prince Cambyses of Persia. A kingdom ruled by our own. There she would be very happy."

The Queen exhibited an air of surprise. She considered a few questions. She understood that perhaps this would be the right time to give her daughter in marriage, yet she did not comprehend why she could not marry a Median noble. Why Cambyses, of a subordinate kingdom. However, she did not make her thoughts audible. She knew her husband well and did not intend to contradict him. In this way she remained free from any hassle that would accompany a disagreement with the monarch. There was silence. The songs of the birds seemed much louder. They continued their walk, slowly, until the king broke the peace in a stern, sombre tone, "I know what I am doing."

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Realizing that there were no openings for discussion, she sought to calm her feeling of loss for her daughter. If her submission to the king was not a virtue of hers she would have had to acquire it regardless. It was a prerequisite to maintain a good relationship between the two of them. "Allow me to send her off with a celebration." She requested.

"Certainly, we will throw her a grand celebration."

Mandana was the only daughter of the royal couple. She had a good relationship with the youth of the palace. She spent her childhood surrounded by other children of the courts, it was anything but solitary. She came to be loved and admired by all. In spite of her many friendships; she particularly appreciated the company of her cousin, Darius. They shared many interests, not to mention his cheerful and understanding disposition made him an excellent company. He also had a good friend, Harpagus, whom also had a good relationship with the princess. Anytime the three of them were together they would talk for hours and enjoy each other's company. They were always trying to find ways to meet together. Something more seemed to exist between them, but at the time being, they were simply three young people, soaking up everything their luxurious lives had to offer.